

KATHERINE SMITH

Tangerine

The private moments of Jesus
come to Laura in a dream
she jerks awake from as if in a free fall,
body curled around her goose-down pillow,
head throbbing. Once, in Appalachia
Laura saw a woman throw
a shuttle across a loom,
sway back and forth
as a few inches of the cloth's stylized pattern
took shape slowly as the latticed shadows of trees
across the wall of her bedroom at dawn.
The lamp on the night table still on,
her memory reaches back like a child's hand
into a bag of candy to extract a sweet.
Laura sits up, sips a glass of water,
comforted by the thought of nurses, firemen,
waitresses serving bitter coffee, tender doughnuts
at all night cafes not far from her house.
She wants the smallest saviors:
china plate of fruit, vanilla
scented lotion, glass of water
on the bedside table. Tonight Laura's
children breathe in their bedrooms,
beautiful, trusting, their need for her
almost outgrown. Finished
with raising them this evening,
Laura smoothes cream into her throat,
swallows a section of tangerine.